Amendments to the Specification

Amend the paragraph at page 7, lines 3-6 as follows:

Figs. 2A & 2B are ~~Fig. 2 is~~ a flow diagram describing the operation of an attachment handling agent according to an embodiment of the present invention,

Amend the paragraph at page 9, line 24 – page 10, line 8 as follows:

Figs. 2A & 2B are ~~Fig. 2 is~~ a flow diagram describing the operation of an attachment handling agent 104 according to an embodiment of the present invention. Each time an E-mail 10 arrives at the receiving server 102 the attachment handling agent 104 starts its operation in step 201 (Fig. 2A) and checks the incoming E-mail for attachments in step 202. If no attachments are present, the receiving server 102 continues to deliver the received E-mail 10 to the recipients in step 203, e.g. by putting the E-mail 10 into the clients mail databases 103 of the according recipients. If attachments are present in the received E-mail 10, the attachment handling agent 104 reads the list of recipients in step 204, e.g. a list of E-mail addresses.

Amend the paragraph at page 10, line 11 – page 12, line 20 as follows:

Next in Fig. 2A ~~Fig. 2~~, the attachment handling agent 104 detaches all attached files 300 in step 205, preferably e.g. to the receiving server's hard disk 106 or into any other storing device ~~accessable~~ accessible by the attachment handling agent 104, thereby generating copies of the attached files 300. After the attached file 300 has been detached, the attachment handling agent 104 creates an identification (attachment ID) for the attachment 300 in step 206. For this purpose the attachment handling agent 104 reads the name of the detached file 300 and the date and time, at which the detached file 300, e.g. a text document, has originally been created, e.g. by means of a text processor. Using file name and creation date and time, the attachment handling agent 104 generates the

attachment ID for the attachment 300. The attachment ID may as well be generated using other data resulting from the attachment file which are usable to identify the attachment, e.g. size of the attachment or electronic signature data. In the next step 207, the attachment handling agent 104 check the server attachment database 105 for an existing server attachment database document with the same attachment ID. If such a document does not exist, that is if the attachment ID is new, the attachment handling agent 104 creates a new server attachment database document in the server attachment database 105 in step 208, e.g. by using an according standard command of the database system. Next the attachment handling agent 104 inserts the created attachment ID into the server attachment database document in step 209 and attaches the detached file 300 thereto in step 210 (see Fig. 2B). In a next step 211 the attachment handling agent 104 enables the recipients of the E-mail 10 to access the new server attachment database document. This can be done e.g. by creating an access control list (ACL) based on the list of recipients or by creating an according entry in an authorization database. Next, the attachment handling agent 104 replaces the attachment 300 in the E-mail 10 with a document link to the new server attachment database document in step 212.

Amend the paragraph at page 11, line 23 – page 12, line 16 as follows:

As illustrated in Fig. 2B ~~Fig. 2~~, in cases, where a server attachment database document with the same attachment ID exists, the attachment handling agent 104 updates the according ACL in step 213 and replaces the attachment 300 in the E-mail with a reference to the already existing server attachment database document in step 212. The reference can be a link 400, e.g. a link as used in hypertext documents, or any other suitable reference to the server attachment database document. In a preferred embodiment of the invention the link 400 is represented by an icon that gives the user direct access from the E-mail to the attachment 300. Preferably the replacing step takes place only if a check of the previous steps (not shown) has been carried out successful. The procedure described above is carried out for each attachment 300 (see step 214). If all

attachments 300 have been processed, the attachment handling agent 104 deletes the files which have been detached in step 215, e.g. from the server's hard disk 106. ~~Finaly~~ Finally, in step 216, the attachment handling agent 104 puts the resulting E-mail 10 into all of the recipient's mail databases 103 on the receiving server 102, to which the attachment handling agent 104 is connected.

Amend the paragraph at page 12, line 27 – page 13, line 9 as follows:

In a preferred embodiment of the present invention the check for an existing server attachment database document 500 can be modified to search for the filename 510 first and then compare the data 511 and time 512 of all hits with the according data from the new attachment 300. Step 212 in Fig. 2B ~~Fig. 2~~ is then [[be]] modified e.g. such that the attachment 300 can be replaced with multiple links 400 to all server attachment database documents 500 containing the same filename 510 in the attachment ID 501, e.g. in an chronological order. This embodiment of the invention is advantageous for handling multiple versions of one attachment.